

LAFAYETTE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

TOWER NOTES



Since 1855

January 11, 2009

SEEDS OF A SOWER

The beginning of a new year is often a time for evaluation – for looking back at where we have been and looking forward to fresh visions. Typically New Year's Resolutions focus on the outer life. I encourage you to contemplate the inner life, as well, specifically your spiritual life as a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Several years ago Rev. Ken Carter developed Seven Questions for the Spiritual Journey, based on Stephen Covey's *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*. I share his questions for your reflection.

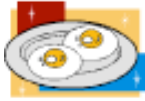
1. Do I believe that God has placed unique gifts within me that might be used to help others, and that my primary fulfillment in life comes through the expression of these gifts?
2. Do I believe that I have been created in the image of God, and that my highest goal in life is to reclaim or recover my true identity as a child of God?
3. Do I understand that the implications of questions One and Two lead toward a life of discipline and discernment?
4. Do I understand that my well-being is linked to the well-being of others, that my salvation, healing, and growth are connected to the salvation, healing, and growth of others, especially those closest to me?
5. Do I understand that my life will be enriched by a willingness to embrace the perspectives of others?
6. Do I recognize that my understanding and expression of the Christian life is but one part of a whole, and that it is in the whole that Jesus Christ is glorified?
7. Do I recognize that I am called to grow into the likeness of Christ, and that my response to God's grace includes a disciplined personal life and a deepening relationship with Christ's body, the Church?

May the new year provide rich opportunities for your personal spiritual growth and service as disciples of Jesus Christ.

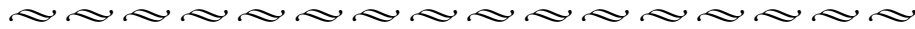
Blessings,

Pastor Lori

**Men's Breakfast
Saturday, January 18, 8:00 a.m.
Fireside Room**

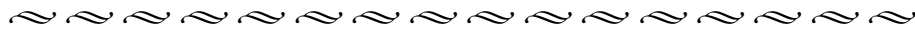


Our guest speaker is Doug Krotz, a member of the Baha'i Faith Community. He is the Baha'i representative at the Lamorinda Interfaith Ministry Association. Doug will share the history and beliefs of the Baha'i Community. All men are welcome to attend.



Passionate Worship Focus Group

Our Worship Committee is hosting a focus group on Passionate Worship Sundays, January 25 and February 8 at 12 noon following worship. Join us for a light lunch. Using materials related to the *Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations*, we will evaluate our current worship experiences and share ideas for enhancing our worship life. Please let the church office know lumc@pacbell.net or 284-4765 if you would like to attend so that we can plan food and provide materials.



**Martin
Luther
King
Day**



**CONVOCATION FOR WORLD PEACE
An Interfaith Service of Prayer for Peace
January 19, 2009 at 7:30 pm**

**Wesley Center, San Ramon Valley United Methodist Church
902 Danville Boulevard, Alamo CA**

**Representatives from the Buddhist, Jewish, Christian, Islamic and Hindu
traditions**

**Words from Dr. King's writings
Interpretive Dance by the Omega West Dance Company
Original art depicting The Life of Dr. King by Hilda Robinson**

YOUTH MINISTRY CELEBRATION

January 18th everyone is invited to our Youth Ministry Celebration at 6 p.m. in the Lower Fireside Room. Dinner will be provided. The Family Game (in Newlywed Game format) will bring lots of challenges and laughs. All parents, youth and interested church members, please join us for a celebration of our youth.



What have the youth been doing recently?
Service, service, service and having fun while doing it.

The Sunday following Thanksgiving, youth brought over \$400 of their own money to shop at Target for our Christmas family. The family was a family of 6 who had just left Winter Nights to move into a house. After shopping for the family they had \$125 left over for a gift card for food. The next Sunday they wrapped all the packages after many of them practiced for Bethlehem Experience. The week before Christmas the youth helped deliver the Christmas presents to the family.

Some of the youth helped make the new paper mache rocks for BE and many participated as actors the following weekend. The Sunday before Christmas they gathered for caroling at the Lafayette Convalescent Hospital on First Street, ate at Taco Bell on the way back to the church and had a gift exchange.

After the Winter Nights family moved into their new home in Concord they needed help moving their furnishings out of storage and several youth and their parents helped with that difficult task.

Bringing in the New Year a little early at a New Year's Eve, Eve, Eve party, they had fun having contests, playing games and reflecting on the old and new year before celebrating with noisemakers.

The senior high snow retreat is scheduled for January 23-25 at the Schroter's cabin at Homewood. Permission slips are due January 18th.

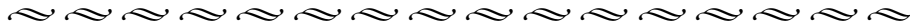


FOUND

A pair of women's glasses were found on the Spice Keeper's table when Bethlehem Experience was being dismantled. They can be claimed in the church office.

Friendship Time Host

We have an opportunity for someone to set up our Friendship Time on Sunday morning or Saturday evening. Three persons are doing this for three months of the year each. An additional person will help us provide beverages and light refreshments throughout the year. Contact the church office if you are willing to assist.



M&M's

A Theater Afternoon on Sunday, February 15, at 2:30 P.M. at the Leshner Center for the Arts in Walnut Creek will be organized by Barbara and Rod Levander for M & M's. (M & M's are any adults married or single.)

"2 Pianos 4 Hands" is a riotous tale of two boys, Ted and Richard, who share the same goal: concert pianist stardom. This includes pushy parents, eccentric teachers, hours of repetitive practice, stage fright, the agony of competitions and the dream of greatness. Accomplished as both musicians and actors, Mark Anders and Carl J. Danielsen portray the dizzy array of characters as well as show off their piano wizardry.

Join the Levanders at their home (3142 Indian Way) after the play for snacks and beverages. Call 284-7687 for reservations by Wednesday Feb.4 \$36.00 per person for a group of 10 or more (otherwise \$41).



Coming Soon: *The Way of Prayer*

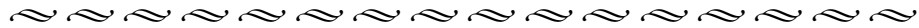
During the season of Lent, small groups experiences in spiritual formation will be offered using the Companions in Christ book, *The Way of Prayer*. This resource explores a number of prayer forms through daily practice to draw you closer to God and give you a deeper sense of spiritual vitality.

One group will meet Wednesday evenings, beginning February 25, 7:00-8:30 p.m. Another group will be offered during the day. If you are interested in a daytime group, let Pastor Lori know what days might be most convenient for you.

A Lenten Quiet Day will be held Saturday, March 7, from 9 a.m. to 12 noon. This is a mini-retreat time for prayer and refreshment for the soul.

Seeking Housing and Hospitality for Covenant Players

Sunday, March 8 the Covenant Players, a Christian drama troupe, will be leading our worship services. We will need to provide lodging and meals for four persons on Saturday and perhaps Sunday evening. If you would like to host one or more of the Covenant Players, please let the church office know. They have interesting stories to tell about their call to ministry and their travels around the world with Covenant Players.

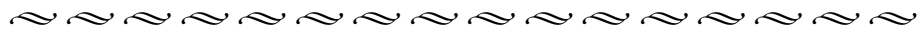


THANK YOU TO OUTGOING LEADERS

With the new year, several church leaders have completed their terms of office on various committees and ministry teams. We offer our appreciation to those who have served the church with their expertise, time, and talent. We are grateful for your service.

Greg Horner Board of Trustees
Jack Cottler Committee on Lay Leadership
Fran Smith Committee on Lay Leadership
Cathy VandenBerghe Committee on Lay Leadership
Tom Kintner Staff-Parish Relations Committee
Wendell Pleis Staff-Parish Relations Committee
Barbara Tilton Altar Steward

A complete list of leaders, committee members, and ministry teams for the new year is included in the January 2009 Church Directory available at Friendship Time or in the church office.



MORE LIBRARY DONATIONS ON THE CART

Check them out!



I Still Believe by Kurt Bruner

(How Listening to Christianity's Critics Strengthens Faith)

Let the critics take their best shot. When the smoke clears, Christianity is still standing. Lots of books have been written on apologetics...savvy defenses of the Christian faith. But should your faith really depend on your ability to outsmart every critic? I Still Believe invites doubters, skeptics, and others to open fire through candid interviews with a wide range of unbelievers, from the gentle offended to the angry antagonist. Rather than making a case for faith, it turns the tables by asking unbelievers to make their case for unbelief. When you truly listen, you gain a better understanding of their underlying feelings and mind-set, suggesting a deeper, unspoken reason millions reject Christian

truth. See for yourself why the burden of proof lies with the unbeliever, not you. I Still Believe lets you eavesdrop on conversations with people who find Christianity hard to swallow. Hear what they've got to say with a compassionate heart but also an objective mind. You'll understand them better. But in the end, you'll also be able to look them confidently in the eye and say, "I still believe".

**Putting the Pieces Back Together,
How Real Life and Real Faith Connect by Mel Lawrenz**

Discover the grand pattern of God's intention and purpose for your life. If you feel that your life is a pile of puzzle pieces and you don't know where to begin, Putting the Pieces Back Together can help you discover God's pattern for integrity, wholeness, and reconciliation. You'll gain a richer understanding of the Christian faith and how God can help you put the pieces together into a coherent pattern.

With Biblical insight, inspiring stories of real people, and thoughtful questions for discussion, this guide takes you on a journey through the major themes of Christian belief as they intersect with real-life issues. Putting the Pieces Back Together will help you build a solid foundation of faith that nothing can ever shake or destroy.

**How to Retire Without Retreating, Getting Your Ducks in a Row
for a Meaningful Retirement by Johnnie Godwin**

50-60-40? Plan NOW for a productive retirement.

As your formal work career winds down, be sure to plan for the ten, twenty, or more years of retirement that await you. In How to Retire Without Retreating, author Johnnie Godwin uses his own experience and research to offer practical tips for preparing both mentally and spiritually for "life's best chapter". Learn how to age with grace, check boredom, stay productive, deal with marital conflicts, nourish body and soul, avoid ruts, and much more. It's never too early to think ahead to retirement. How to Retire Without Retreating will guide you toward making these years everything you.....and God.....want them to be.

Cats in the Parsonage by Clair Shaffer, Jr.

Taffy and Tiffany came into their lives over a decade ago, and nothing has been the same since! These two little rascals have brought joy and delight into the lives of Clair and his wife Brenda, as only two lovable kitties could. As the years have gone by, this country preacher and his wife have learned valuable lessons and enjoyed many hours of hilarity watching the antic of their two little furballs. You'll chuckle and you'll be touched by their delightful stories but above all you'll discover the significance of Clair's favorite verse, "ask the animals and they will teach you." Job 12:7

4TH AND GOAL, Coaching for Life's Tough Calls by Bill McCartney

McCartney, former football coach of University of Colorado and President of Promise Keepers, inspires and challenges men to respond with integrity to life's "tough calls." Ninety of his hard-hitting commentaries adapted from the Promise Keepers 4th and Goal radio program encourage men to take godly action in their roles as husbands, fathers, businessmen and disciples of Christ.

Act of God, Active God: Recovering from Natural Disaster by Dr. Gary Harbaugh

“Here are insights and understandings help persons of faith to struggle with that seeming contradiction.....Instead of seeing disasters as ‘acts of God,’ Dr. Harbaugh shows that when disasters occur, God, in fact, is active: active in and through our questions, confusion, and doubts; active in and through our responses and actions; active in and through the community; and active in and through people of faith.” Gilbert B. Furst, Director, Lutheran Disaster Response



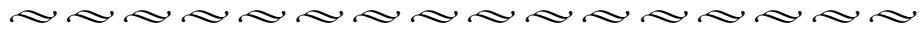
A Gift to the Community - The Bethlehem Experience Reaches Many

The Bethlehem Experience once again proved to be a wonderful outreach to our community, allowing over 450 people to experience the true meaning of Christmas through the telling of the events leading up to our Savior's birth. On Sunday night alone, over 215 people visited Lafayette United Methodist church to participate in The Bethlehem Experience. Approximately 80 members of our church actively helped to put on this year's production, as set designers, builders and painters, setup crew, prop procurers, communications and publicity managers, actors, costumers, cashiers, greeters, food preparers and servers, musicians, tour schedulers, crowd control and entertainers, photographers, animal caretakers, and much, much more. Add to that all who went through the marketplace of Bethlehem or prayed for the participants and guests, and The Bethlehem Experience was truly an all-church gift to our community and to each of us. Thank you!! To relive the "experience" click on the following link to view photos of The Bethlehem Experience taken by our photographer, Mark Sawdon.
<http://picasaweb.google.com/lh/sredir?uname=gerringerster&target=ALBUM&id=5288617856355627617&authkey=UKyqO2hlwA&invite=CjK3PEJ&feat=email>

The Bethlehem Experience Reflection

Kazzy the camel has returned home with her friends, the sets have been taken down and moved to storage, the props are put away, the costumes are being cleaned, the Fellowship Hall, Maggie Mae Lounge and other parts of the Church have been returned to their normal state, the thank-you's and kudos have been shared and the straw has been cleared for another two years. By all accounts, The Bethlehem Experience was a huge success! But, now is not the time to rest on our laurels, or put it completely out of our minds until 2010. Now is the time to step back and take a moment to reflect on the overall experience. What went well? What didn't go well? Did we achieve our intended goals? Why do you and/or your family participate in The Bethlehem Experience? If you didn't participate this time, what would convince you to participate in the future? How can we make the "experience" even more meaningful and enjoyable next time? To answer these and other burning questions, a short survey has been prepared, and can be found in the Fellowship Hall, the Church Office, and in the worship bulletin at upcoming services. Please complete the survey, and turn it in to the offering plate,

church office or basket in the Fellowship Hall. You can also call Teresa Gerringer, 925-943-7911 or email her at tgerringer@comcast.net, with your thoughts, suggestions or questions. Of course, it's never too early to be thinking about how you'd like to be a part the "experience" in 2010.



Notes of Appreciation for Missions/Thanksgiving/Christmas Offerings

From **Shelter Inc. of Contra Costa County**, Tim O'Keefe, Executive Director:

Thank you! On behalf of the Board of Directors and families we serve, thank you for your contribution of \$993 to SHELTER, Inc. of Contra Costa County. Your decision to donate to SHELTER, Inc. provides both financial support and encouragement as we work together towards our mission to "prevent homelessness and promote self-sufficiency among low-income residents of Contra Costa County."

Please know that your contribution will make a difference in Contra Costa County—keeping families from becoming homeless, helping homeless families get off the streets and providing housing to low-income residents. It is because of your partnership that we are able to help over 4,000 men, women and children each year.

To view a short video and hear stories from some of our clients, visit our website at www.shelterincofccc.org.

From **California Council on Alcohol Problems**, Rev. James Butler, Executive Director:

Thank you for remembering the California Council on Alcohol Problems this Christmas. Your gift of \$200 will help us meet our 2008 obligations as well as begin 2009, reading for the challenges and opportunities that we will encounter.

Even now in the days before Christmas, we are working to educate and encourage the legislators to increase the tax on all alcohol products. This tax has not been raised in seventeen years, and in our current state budgetary crisis, we hope that the legislature will agree that it is time to raise this tax.

We know that this will be an uphill battle and we will face a determined and well-financed alcohol industry. However, we do not enter this battle alone. We have the support of other organizations, as well as the support of those like you who are able to see the value in trying to prevent the problems caused by alcohol before they begin.

From **Contra Costa Interfaith Housing**, Louise Bourassa, Executive Director:

It is my pleasure, on behalf of the Board of Directors of Contra Costa Interfaith Housing, to thank you for the generous donation of \$500. Your contribution will help CCIH provide permanent solutions to family homelessness in Contra Costa County. It will help provide a program that reduces the number of nights individuals spend in shelters or the street by 25,000 nights per year. The on-site support services that CCIH provides helps formerly homeless families stabilize and become healthy, contributing members of society.

We could not do this valuable work without the support of our donors. Thank you very much for this generous gift.

CHURCH STAFF

Pastor.....The Reverend Lori Sawdon
Pastor e-mail.....Sawdon2@pacbell.net
Director of Music Ministry.....Bunny Gruhn
Organist & Keyboard/Pianist.....Ken Mansfield
Office administrator.....Lorri Sullivan
Joyful Beginnings Preschool Director.....Dot Feist
Custodian.....Jason Cano

TOWER NOTES

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Computer Formatting.....Tom & Mary Henderson
Mailing.....Fran Smith and Evelyn Clark

TOWER NOTES DEADLINE

2nd & 4th Thursday by Noon – Next Deadline **Thursday, Jan. 22, 2009**

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